

In times of economic duress, when the fund is paying out significantly more than is coming in, the Federal Government has the option of loaning money to States, including California, to cover the payment deficit.

California had to take out such a loan during the COVID business shutdowns and took on by far the most debt of any State. The current debt amounts to \$18.8 billion. This was because of the huge volume of claims, yes, but also because of a staggering amount of fraud.

A coalition letter from dozens of Chambers of Commerce in California notes:

The Employment Development Department proved ill-equipped for the rapid increase in claimants. After numerous oversight hearings and analyses of EDD's failings, it is clear that EDD's failings added further to the UI fund's insolvency in two ways: by failing to prevent fraud and, instead, distributing funds to fraudulent claimants; and by mistakenly distributing overpayments to legitimate claimants. Although EDD and local law enforcement have attempted to recover some of these mistaken distributions, recovery rates appear to be less than 10 percent of the mistaken distributions. In other words, these mistakes at EDD added to the UI fund deficit.

□ 1115

The total scale of EDD fraud in California is estimated at \$32.6 billion. This unprecedented loss was almost entirely preventable if Julie Su had taken basic fraud prevention measures.

A January 2021 report from the California State auditor notes that the EDD fraud occurred for three main reasons:

First, EDD waited about 4 months to automate a key antifraud measure.

Second, EDD allowed claimants to collect benefits even though they were using suspicious addresses. In one case, over 1,700 claims came from a single address.

Third, EDD removed a key safeguard against improper payments without fully understanding the significance of the safeguard.

Further, the State auditor reports that: "Despite repeated warnings, EDD did not bolster its fraud detection efforts until months into the pandemic."

"And it does not reliably track suspicious claims and resolution to determine the effectiveness of its fraud prevention tools."

By the way, if you are wondering where all this money, \$32.6 billion went, the CEO of LexisNexis Risk Solutions has this to say: "Seventy percent of that money left California. It left this country. It went to transnational criminal groups that have used that money for nefarious purposes to harm our democracy. Some of that money has been used in sex trafficking, child extortion."

At this point, California is one of only four States in the country that hasn't repaid its debt to the Federal Government. Now, taxpaying businesses are on the hook. In the case of fund insolvency for 2 consecutive

years—as is the case with California—Federal law mandates an automatic increase in payroll taxes that amounts to \$21 per employee. The tax continues to ratchet up by \$21 per employee each year the fund remains insolvent, with a maximum tax increase of \$434 per employee per year.

Now, one might ask, why did California not repay its debt to the Federal Government last year when it had a \$97.5 billion surplus?

There is no good answer to that question.

I have actually joined with Representative OBERNOLTE to call on California's Governor and legislature to repay the loan so the burden doesn't fall on employers, and I am calling on the United States Senate to consider this a case study in what we don't want for our country.

UNSPEAKABLE TRAGEDY IN NASHVILLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. OGLES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. OGLES. Madam Speaker, I rise to remember those lost in an unspeakable tragedy that took place in Nashville at the Covenant School, which is in my district, and to acknowledge the power of prayer.

At approximately 10:13 a.m., evil ran rampant in the halls of the Christian academy and claimed the lives of three children and three staff members:

Hallie Scruggs, age 9;

Evelyn Dieckhaus, age 9;

William Kinney, age 9;

Mike Hill, the school custodian;

Dr. Katherine Koonce, the head of the school; and

Cynthia Peak, a substitute teacher.

These innocent lives were lost in a senseless act of violence.

As a father of three children, I cannot begin to imagine what the families of these six individuals are experiencing right now.

To my fellow Tennesseans in Nashville and the Covenant School, we are here for you. We are sending our deepest and most sincere condolences. My prayers are with each and every one of you.

I also want to recognize the bravery demonstrated by the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department and to all of the first responders who took exemplary steps during this tragic event.

To Officers Rex Engelbert and Michael Collazo, thank you. Your incredible bravery, valor, and courage in the face of danger saved lives.

Our community is broken. To those who are wondering and trying to make sense of the world, the Lord says: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10.

Please join me for a moment of silence.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DALE DEES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BEAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor the life and memory of Commissioner Dale Dees from my hometown of Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Mr. Dees reminds me of an Alan Jackson country song, "Small Town Southern Man." He was always proud of what he had, and he was raised on the ways of gentle kindness.

Mr. Dees was a lifelong resident of Fernandina Beach. He came from humble beginnings, and yet he was a man of great influence. His sincerity made everyone feel special.

As a young man, he enlisted in the United States Army, serving Uncle Sam. Once he completed his tour of duty, he devoted himself to his family's dry cleaner business and revolutionized dry cleaning in Fernandina Beach by opening a drive-through option. Eventually, he would open the town's first gun shop. He was a self-made businessman, and he understood the value of hard work.

His pride and joy was his family. Sharon was his beloved wife of 62 years and was his soulmate. Together they were blessed with two children, Mike and Michelle; son-in-law Shawn; two grandchildren, and great-grandson Kamden.

Dale exemplified the meaning of leadership, and he saw public service as a duty. He served two terms as commissioner for Fernandina Beach and strived to make a difference in the lives of everyone in the city.

Fernandina Beach has lost a pillar of its community. Dale will be dearly missed, and our condolences are with his family. He truly was a small town Southern man.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 22 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, on this 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war, we pray Your divine blessing on those veterans who left hearth and home to respond to the

call of our Nation. We give tribute to their faithfulness to the ideals of freedom and democracy, even when the winds of war blew with increasing uncertainty.

We pray for those who, in the ambiguity of conflict, found themselves facing unimaginable ethical dilemmas and who are now left with indelible moral trauma. Bless those who yet tend to lingering physical and emotional injury. Give each of them peace when the nightmares overwhelm and the echoes of battle resound in their slumber.

May all who returned unwelcomed find themselves received into Your warm embrace and upheld by Your loving and everlasting arms. In Your mercy, sanctify the lives of those who remain missing in action and preserve the memory of the ones who never made it home.

Grant eternal rest to those comrades ever memorialized on granite walls and gravestones across the country. May they now know Your peace.

Holy and merciful God, mend the wounds of war, both seen and unseen, individual and corporate—that as we commemorate this anniversary, we would acknowledge the cost of war and honor the value of peace.

In the everlasting strength of Your name we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. HOULAHAN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

CONGRATULATING RYAN REDINGTON

(Mr. TIFFANY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ryan Redington on winning the 2023 Iditarod Sled Dog Race, traveling almost 1,000 miles in 8 days, 21 hours, 12 minutes, and 58 seconds.

Ryan has competed in the Iditarod 16 times, and although he may not be

from Wisconsin's Seventh District, he spends his fall and winter utilizing the lands in Douglas County to train his sled dogs for the race.

This is not the Redington family's first time in the Iditarod. Ryan's grandfather is one of the cofounders of the race and is now known as the Father of the Iditarod.

Ryan has shown us what patience and dedication look like after recovering from being hit by a snowmobile last year, and I am pleased that my district got to assist in bringing him and his dogs to victory.

Congratulations, Ryan, on achieving your lifelong dream.

EXPLOITING MEDICARE THROUGH ACO REACH

(Ms. PORTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, corporate profiteers have no place in Medicare, but some private insurers don't give patients a choice.

The Biden administration has taken important steps to change the direct contracting model, which stripped seniors of traditional Medicare and moved them to private coverage—without their consent.

Its successor program, ACO REACH, still invites private actors to exploit Medicare to boost their bottom lines. For-profit insurers can pocket taxpayer dollars that they don't spend on their patients. Too many have long histories of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Now, the administration is expanding ACO REACH, including doubling its coverage of underserved communities. As a result, millions on Medicare may soon face higher costs, smaller provider networks, and worse care.

Strong guardrails are needed now, and I urge my colleagues to stand up for patients and get corporate greed out of Medicare.

EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF PARENTS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, parents everywhere must have the ability to make educational decisions for their children. Though an obvious right, unfortunately, many school districts have been influenced by extremist special interest groups ignoring parental wishes.

In response, House Republicans, led by Chairwoman VIRGINIA FOXX, passed the Parents Bill of Rights Act. This legislation will make clear to schools that parents have a right to know what is being taught to their children, be heard by teachers and school boards, see the school budget and spending, protect the privacy of children, and keep their children safe.

As a parent of four sons, Roxanne and I appreciate local elected school boards running schools. As a grandfather, I want my sons and daughters-in-law to have the same level of oversight for our nine grandchildren.

I am grateful for the leadership of Ellen Weaver, the South Carolina Superintendent of Education, a champion for the rights of parents.

In conclusion, God bless our troops who successfully protected America for 20 years as the global war on terrorism continues moving from the safe haven of Afghanistan to America.

God bless our Vietnam veterans.

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY

(Ms. CRAIG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CRAIG. Mr. Speaker, this Friday is International Transgender Day of Visibility, a time each year when we uplift and recognize the strength and resilience of the trans community.

The United States is home to 1.6 million trans youth and adults—1.6 million siblings, grandparents, brothers, sisters, friends, coworkers, and loved ones.

At a moment when trans-Americans are under direct attack in States across our Nation and in this body, I am here today to honor and celebrate each of these courageous, inspiring human beings just trying to live and be treated with dignity and respect.

I am here to say to each of you, no matter what you are hearing in your communities or from some Members of this body, you are loved, you are valued, and you are worthy.

Over the past 40 years, our country has made progress, but this is a moment and a critical reminder that we still have work to do.

As we mark International Trans Day of Visibility, we also remember that we must never take our feet off the gas pedal when it comes to this critical fight.

Please know I am always in your corner.

A SAD DAY FOR WOMEN'S SPORTS

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, ESPN celebrated Women's History Month by putting out a tweet celebrating swimmer Lia Thomas. The only problem, Lia Thomas is not a woman.

Lia, whose real name is William, is a man pretending to be a woman, ranked about 400 in men's swimming, but now about number 1 in women's.

This individual identifying as a woman was allowed to compete in women's swimming for the University of Pennsylvania. Consequently, this